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Action

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FROM: Bogota

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TO: Secretary of State

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JOINT USIS - STATE MESSAGE

Following day of rumors and speculation yesterday (mainly anticipating US invasion of Cuba) today's editorial reaction Kennedy speech one of unanimous support. Bogota's 2 liberal dailies both carried editorials praising US stand and particularly Kennedy's attitude of calm determination. ESPECTADOR notes that Cuban situation laid before us in exact dimensions without any attempt at distortion while TIEMPO states that even at risk of debilitating his personal prestige, Kennedy refused to indulge in excesses "nor to bow to belligerent fury of the exalted." Re proposed US actions both papers supported US aims and both called on Colombia to stand up and be counted with US. ESPECTADOR expresses hope for peaceful resolution of crisis but exhorts preparation for bitter, sorrowful, difficult days. Concludes not only future but very existence of our peoples depends upon manner in which we meet this situation. TIEMPO notes Colombia bound by moral, legal and political obligations to honor her commitments which means rallying with all assistance to US and to defend ourselves.

From conservative press reaction somewhat different. Of two Bogota dailies only one (EL SIGLO) had editorial comment today. This too gave full support to President's action but unlike ESPECTADOR and TIEMPO failed to note any necessity for action on Colombia's part or any co-responsibility for resolution present Cuban situation. Reasoning of editorial that US blockade is exercise of elementary right, viz. self-defense. No mention of dangers to hemisphere, violation Rio Pact, etcetera, but merely that previous measures have proved insufficient requiring

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US to assume more energetic attitude more in consonance with gravity of situation.

In fast survey local politicians following Kennedy speech TIEMPO reports almost total agreement with President's actions. Important representatives all factions except MRL agreed with need for US actions. All voiced absolute necessity of US position in defense hemisphere some stating only fault was not having adopted present attitude and measures sooner. MRL Senator Uribe stated US action constitutes aggression against Cuba and has no more justification than Russian blockade of Turkey or Iran. Also attributed Kennedy speech to internal political motivations.

Meanwhile Embassy has reports numerous meetings leftist groups including central committee PCC this morning presumably to define strategy. No overt actions as of noon today.

Daily summary reactions to follow.

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